

Blues made to fight by brave Walton

By **STUART EARP**

Wycombe W. 3,
Walton and H. 2

WYCOMBE Wanderers' Tuesday night friendly against Walton and Hershaw produced some spectacular goals from both sides and yet the overall standard of football was disappointing as the Blues struggled to put their game together consistently.

Four goals — including two beauties — were packed into an entertaining first half but after the break, the match petered out in a game of errors. Wycombe, who had John Delaney back after injury, showed a marked lack of understanding between forwards and midfield while several players had a tendency to hold on to the ball too long.

Nevertheless, there was enough to keep the sparse crowd interested until the final whistle, with Walton goalkeeper Gary Bloom pulling off some magnificent saves towards the close.

Bruce Macrae got his side off to a fine start with a brilliant goal after six minutes. Terry Reardon's intelligent call saw the ball come across from Howard Kennedy and played through to Macrae on the edge of the box. The young striker turned and lashed home a powerful left foot shot which left Bloom flat-footed.

Bloom saved well from Mick Holifield before Macrae struck again in the 10th minute,

nodding home Kennedy's corner. At this stage, Wanderers were well in command, opening up large gaps in Walton's overworked defence which included former Wycombe man Paul Griffiths at centre back. Accurate, first-time passes and neat one-twoes had the visitors in all sorts of trouble but they fought their way back into the game with a truly superb goal after 20 minutes.

From a corner, John Griffith powered in a header which Peter Spittle tipped over the crossbar in fine style. The resulting flag kick was cleared out to Griffith again, on the edge of the box and he unleashed a stunning drive that was still rising as it bulged the back of the net. Spittle could hardly have seen it and this must stand as the best goal scored by a visiting player at Loakes Park this season.

The goal did Walton's confidence a power of good and after Spittle had saved well from Hawkett, the same player squared the scores five minutes before the break. Keith Mead gave the ball away and Griffith's well flighted cross was headed home by Hawkett with the defence in a tangle.

Increasing their work rate after the interval, Walton chased and harried constantly. This threw Wanderers out of their stride and they were forced into numerous errors. The passing deteriorated rapidly and too much individualism crept into the game.

With Griffiths and Barry Mason blocking the middle of the defence, Walton broke up many Wycombe raids and the winning goal came predictably from a set piece. Delaney, a half time substitution, rose

high at the near post to nod home Ray Eaton's swerving corner.

Wycombe regained control for the last quarter and only fine saves by Bloom prevented a larger victory margin for the Blues. Macrae was twice robbed of a hat-trick by the 'keeper while Evans stood in wonder when Bloom instinctively punched away a stinging volley from close range.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, D. Bullock (sub J. Delaney 45 mins), K. Mead, R. Eaton; D. Alexander, T. Reardon, H. Kennedy; D. Evans, B. Macrae, M. Holifield. Sub J. Maskell (not used).

WALTON: G. Bloom; P. Mason, B. Mason, P. Griffiths, J. Brown; M. Shepherd (sub I. Molloy 45 mins), G. Burridge, S. Baker; C. Bissett, J. Griffith, P. Hawkett.

Referee: I. Graham (High Wycombe).

Half time: 2-2. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe — Macrae (6, 10), Delaney (68), Walton — Griffith (21), Hawkett (40).

Attendance 180.